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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001071

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LONDON FOR POL CHARLES GURNEY
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SUBJECT: NEW NEPAL PRIME MINISTER ASKS U.S. FOR
UNDERSTANDING AND PATIENCE

REF: KATHMANDU 1060

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES ROBERT K. BOGGS. REASONS: 1.5 (B) AND
(D)

1. (C) Summary. Nepal's Foreign Secretary, Madhu Raman Acharya, convoked the Charge' privately on June 10 under instructions from the new Prime Minister and Acting Foreign Minister, Surya Bahadur Thapa. The Secretary explained the PM's current efforts to persuade the major political parties to participate in a new cabinet and to request USG patience as he pursues this politically difficult goal. The Prime Minister signaled that he will be naming several cabinet officials on June 11 from his own party, but expects to be able to add representatives from other parties in coming weeks. End summary.

2. (C) According to the Foreign Secretary, Prime Minister Thapa wanted to underscore to the USG that the King's decree of June 4 appointing Thapa as PM responded to all three of the principal demands of the major political parties at that time. These demands were the following: the delegation to the new PM of full executive powers, a new cabinet appointed by the PM in consultation with the parties, and representation in the cabinet by all the parliamentary parties. Since his appointment, Thapa has paid calls on the leaders of most of the major political parties. Although Thapa's invitations to join the new cabinet have been met so far with refusals, the PM believes that this is just posturing by the opposition leaders and that in fact they have signaled some flexibility. In addition to top leaders, the PM has met with a number of second-echelon members of the party central committees. The PM reportedly believes that some serious rethinking is going on within party policy-making circles and is confident that the parties will in time join his government. In the meantime, the PM is adhering to a policy of not alienating the parties further, making no derogatory statements about them and not permitting excessive use of force against party demonstrations.

3. (C) On the afternoon of June 11, Acharya said, the PM will announce his choices for ministers for a very small cabinet. Some 3-5 members of the PM's own National Democratic Party (RPP) will be chosen to run the government "for the time being." PM Thapa intends to "keep the door open" for further appointments, and will reserve the right to shift portfolios as new ministers are added. The PM's political priorities will be to pursue peace negotiations with the Maoists to a successful conclusion, hold parliamentary and local-level elections, maintain continuity in Nepal's foreign policy, fight corruption and strengthen governance.

4. (C) The Foreign Secretary enumerated a number of ways in which Nepal's political environment allegedly had improved since Thapa's appointment on June 4. The parties, he asserted, have become reconciled to the fact that the new prime minister is another monarchical appointee rather than the candidate of their choice. The party leaders, he also claimed, realize that their street agitations are not generating popular support nor going anywhere politically. Some Nepali Congress leaders, Acharya said, already acknowledge that PM Thapa is an improvement over his predecessor. One advantage that Thapa enjoys that was not true of his predecessor is the full support of his own party. Of the opposition parties' main current demands--the announcement of a date for elections or the reinstatement of the House of Representatives--the Maoists would not permit elections. Acharya would not comment on the prospects for the resuscitating Parliament. Speaking for himself, the Secretary said, he suspected that some of the political

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parties would not join the Thapa government but would support it from outside. In conclusion, Acharya said, the Prime Minister asked for patience from the USG, since it would take time for the changed political situation to clarify.

5. (C) Comment. The new Prime Minister's private message to the USG was clearly self-serving and not particularly revealing, since rumors of his impending cabinet appointments have featured widely in the press. It is hard for us to be as sanguine as the Prime Minister claims to be about his

ultimate success in drawing the main parties into his government although Kathmandu is rife with rumors that the Nepali Congress will join after a few weeks (reftel). The PM's message is, however, indicative of his energetic and skillful handling of potential political allies and, in this case, an important foreign donor.

BOGGS